

House Republican Press Release

July 21, 2004
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Veterans Deserve Our Gratitude and Support



*By State Rep. Toni Boucher, R-143rd, Wilton,
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Veterans have sacrificed many years of their lives in service to our nation, and they deserve our gratitude and respect, especially those now older and dealing with health and financial concerns.

In the Connecticut legislature over the past two years, the state House and Senate have voted to improve the state Veterans' Home in Rocky Hill. Local towns now have the opportunity to expand property tax exemptions on homes owned by veterans and their spouses.

It is the least we can do.

This year, the legislature increased the number of veterans eligible for burial in the state veterans' cemetery and admission to the state Veterans' Home and Hospital, now renamed the Veterans' Home. It eliminated war service as a criterion for burial or admission, making any veteran honorably discharged from active service in the U. S. Armed Forces eligible.

A year ago, the legislature took even broader action.

A 2003 law makes all veterans who have at least 90 days of active duty service in the armed forces since August 2, 1990, eligible for property tax, education, and other war service benefits, even if they did not serve in a war or war theater. Under prior law, veterans of this period were eligible only if they served in Somalia after December 2, 1992; in Bosnia after December 20, 1995; or during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, August 2, 1990 to June 30, 1994.

Another 2003 law expands the number of veterans and their surviving spouses eligible for an optional property tax exemption, by increasing the maximum income a person can have and be eligible for the program by \$25,000, to \$51,100 for a single veteran or a survivor of a veteran and \$56,900 for married veteran. To be eligible for the optional benefit, the person must be eligible for the \$1,000 property tax exemption that municipalities must provide for eligible wartime veterans and their surviving spouses.

By law, a municipality may exempt up to \$10,000 of the property's value. The law alternatively allows the municipality to set a maximum exemption of up to 10% of the property's value.

I hope local cities and towns take a closer look at implementing this optional increase in veterans' property tax exemptions.

Further, a 2003 law, which I fought for at the request of a local citizen, extends veterans and armed forces members' property tax exemptions that formerly applied only to owned property to include leased motor vehicles. It allows eligible recipients to receive refunds property of taxes on leased vehicles, whether they paid the taxes directly or through their lease payments effective October 1, 2003.

Finally, I have been concerned about at least one local veteran I know of, who has received less than helpful treatment at the local Office of Veterans Advocacy and Assistance, staffed by state Department of Veterans Affairs. I brought this to the attention of the state Commissioner of Veterans Affairs in the hope that veterans receive encouragement and positive assistance by state officials.

I hope this information is useful to veterans and their families, and I am available to provide whatever assistance I can regarding state veterans benefits. Likewise, I know Rep. Christopher Shays is available for assistance on federal veterans programs. I have forwarded the above information on to both the state Veterans Affairs Commissioner and to Congressman's Shays Office. If I can answer and questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 1-800-842-1423.

Rep. Boucher serves the 143rd Assembly District in the state House of Representatives.